

New Interactive Program Gives Students In Ventura County Taste Of White House Decision Making

By [LANCE OROZCO](#) · SEP 30, 2016



Students in White House Situation Room Command Center moved from Washington, D.C. to Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. The real-life room helps students get the feel of being in the middle of the national decision making process

KCLU's Lance Orozco reports on a new, interactive program at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley which gives high school, and college students a taste of the White House decision making process, called "The Situation Room Experience."

We're inside of one of the world's most famous conference rooms complexes.

It's the White House Situation Room's Command Center, a room used by seven American Presidents from John F. Kennedy to George W. Bush. But, the room is no longer in Washington, D.C. It was taken apart, and rebuilt at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley.

Now, it's the centerpiece of "The Situation Room Experience." It's a new, interactive program which gives high school, and college students to see what it's like for government leaders and the media to deal with a domestic and foreign policy crisis.

It's chaotic as the teens cast as everything from U.S. Secretary of State to network news correspondents cope with a scenario that includes the President being targeted by an assassination attempt.

Mira Cohen, the Reagan Library's Director of Education, says when you walk into the new center at the Reagan Library, you're in a replica of the White House Press Briefing Room. In the back of the room, and on a second floor are work spaces for students who represent TV networks like CBS and CNN. There's another room that represents a hospital conference room, where the President's staff is updated on his condition. And then, there's the Command Center, where students representing White House cabinet members are meeting to make key decisions. The students have electronic tablets to outline their roles in the scenario, as well as to get information updates to help them make decisions.

Duke Blackwood, Director of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, says the idea is to give students a complete interactive experience. Blackwood says four years of effort, and \$1.5 million dollars went into creating "The Situation Room Experience," and now they are hoping high schools, and colleges will want to take advantage of it. The scenario includes more than 450 pages of original content, forcing students acting as government leaders, and news correspondents to make dozens of decisions. The program is offered at no cost to schools.

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The scenario includes more than three dozen separate roles, and more than three hours of original videos of what appears to be live news coverage intended to make the experience seem realistic. The 75 minute program is set up with a half hour pre-briefing, and followed by a 45 minute de-briefing so students can talk about the experience.

33 government students from Alta Loma High School in Rancho Cucamonga are taking part in this debut of the “Situation Room Experience.” Liz Ramos, who’s their teacher, says this is engaging students in a way books, or discussions in the classroom can’t. Kyle Boser played the Secretary of State. He says it was exciting to try to figure out how to handle the crisis, even though it felt like there was a lot of pressure.

Classmate Delany Townsend was cast as a social media producer covering the White House for CBS News, and says it was tough to sift through the information coming in to figure out what was fact, and what was rumor. She says the experience left her with a lot of admiration for people who do it for a living, after seeing how tough it can be a times.

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